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MANAGEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

U. S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
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A summary of significant events of
interest to USDA management

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PROCUREMENT
CHRONOLOGY

BUDGET HEARINGS SCHEDULE.....House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee hearings on the FY 78 budget are tentatively scheduled as follows:

- General Budget Overview rescheduled for February 9, 1:00 p.m.
- General Agricultural Outlook rescheduled for February 9, 3:00 p.m.
- Secretary of Agriculture, February 16 & 17, 1:00 p.m.
- Farm Credit Administration rescheduled for February 18, 10:00 a.m. Agency hearings will begin the week of February 21. The tentative schedule should be developed shortly. A tentative schedule for the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee hearings will be available toward the end of January. (Contact: Bob Sherman, OMF, ext. 76176)

FLEXITIME IN ERS.....Beginning on January 31, all ERS Washington office employees will participate in a 6-month trial implementation of flexitour. Flexitour is a modified flexitime program that will permit ERS employees to preselect, for a 3-month period, their daily working hours. Office hours will be 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. with lunch limited to the normal 30 minutes. There will be a core time of 9:30 to 3:30 during which all employees must be present. Control of hours worked will be through a daily sign in/sign out log. Prior to implementation, employees will select the 8-hour period that will then become their normal day.

A survey conducted by ERS indicated that 75% of the employees responding to a questionnaire were in favor of the new system. The results of the trial implementation will be reviewed at the end of 6 months and recommendations for continued ERS application will then be made. (Contact: Steve Ledford, EMSC, ext. 77747)

STANDARD ADP FORMS PROGRAM.....As a follow-up to the Departmental Forms and Reports Reduction Campaign, ADS established a standard ADP forms special review team to recommend ways to reduce, improve, and control ADP related documents. To date, 64 forms have been eliminated as a result of this review. In addition, the usage of standard to total forms has increased from 25% in May to the present 47%. The credit for this increase in standard forms usage goes to the Management Council members who encouraged the use of standard forms by their programmers and analysts. This has resulted in increased programmer efficiency and improved computer program documentation. (Contact: H. W. Meetze, ADS, ext. 76275)

PERSONALIZED REPORT OF BENEFITS FOR APHIS EMPLOYEES..... APHIS has joined with Benefacts, Inc. to produce a personalized report of benefits for each employee. The benefits provided to Federal employees are largely unknown or misunderstood. This report will not only be informative but will provide guidance that may be used for future planning.

Each benefits statement is divided into four parts. The first part, "Security Today," provides information on health care and disability benefits; the second part, "Future Security," deals with retirement benefits; the third part, "Total Compensation," lists the employee's salary plus an estimate of the amount APHIS contributes towards the employee's benefits; and the fourth part is a financial planner designed to provide general advice and a convenient place to record related information.

The reaction of APHIS employees to their benefits statements has been overwhelmingly favorable. The statements were mailed out during the first week of December. By December 21, APHIS had heard from 3,604 employees, 3,459 of whom asked that the statement be continued on an annual basis. (Contact: Don Smith, APHIS, ext. 75362)

FNS JOB ENRICHMENT ANALYSIS..... The Personnel Division of FNS, in conjunction with Krause Associates, has recently completed a job enrichment analysis in its Western Region (San Francisco). The study dealt with assessing problems related to morale, turnover, and job satisfaction within the Quality Control section of the Food Stamp Program, Western Region.

The Western Region's Quality Control problem was manifested by 180 percent turnover in an 18 month period. Initially this was attributed to the lengthiness of Quality Control travel assignments (averaging 2 to 3 weeks). Some of the findings indicate that:

- ...Travel and having an active social life were not essential factors in job satisfaction.
- ...Receiving adequate feedback on their assignments is an important factor in job satisfaction.
- ...There was no significant correlation found between age, sex, marital status, education, grade, and job satisfaction.

Two of the recommendations resulting from the study indicate that:

- ...The region should consider rotational assignments in order to develop individual skills and organization needs.
- ...A system of Matrix Management should be considered in order to delegate special tasks to lower graded staff members. This would result in greater accountability and greater acceptance of responsibility.

Copies of this study are available. (Contact: Karen Pobega, FNS, ext. 78023)

FISCAL YEAR 1978 BUDGET:

The President is scheduled to present the Fiscal Year 1978 budget to Congress on Monday, January 17. The President's Press Briefing is tentatively scheduled for January 15, 10:00 a.m.

The Secretary's Press Briefing is tentatively scheduled for January 15, 12 noon. (Contact: Bob Sherman, OMF, ext. 76176)

ADP POLICY ADVISORY BOARD.....An 11-AR policy/procedure establishing a Department ADP Policy Advisory Board has been written and will be distributed soon to Management Council members for comments. (Contact: H. W. Meetze, ADS, ext. 76275)

NEW ORLEANS COMPUTER CENTER PROCUREMENT.....The Department submitted a Request for Delegation of Procurement Authority to GSA on December 21, 1976, for the competitive procurement of hardware at the New Orleans Computer Center. (Contact: R. Long, ADS, ext. 75789)

CASH AWARDS AND QUALITY INCREASES.....Employees in Grades GS-6 and below received more monetary recognition than employees at higher levels in FY 76. Although 50 percent of the work force is in Grades 7-11, fewer quality increases were given to this group than to any other group.

Cash Awards (Including participants in group awards)

<u>GS Grade (Or Equiv.)</u>	<u>Avg. No. Employees in Grade Group</u>	<u>% of Total</u>	<u>No. of Cash Awards</u>	<u>Rate per 100 Employees</u>
GS-6 and below	21,968	28	2063	9.4
GS-7 thru 11	40,204	50	2450	6.1
GS-12 and above	17,715	22	645	3.6
Total USDA	79,887	100	5158	6.4

Three small agencies gave no cash awards; the highest agency rate was 15.8%.

Quality Increases Granted

<u>GS Grade (only)</u>	<u>Avg. No. Employees in Grade Group</u>	<u>% of Total</u>	<u>No. of Qual. Increases</u>	<u>Rate per 100 Employees</u>
GS-6 and below	20,712	27	809	3.9
GS-7 thru 11	39,195	50	923	2.4
GS-12 and above	17,593	23	589	3.3
Total USDA	77,500	100	2321	3.0

Two small agencies granted no quality increases; the highest agency rate was 9.3%. (Contact: M. T. Paulsen, OP, ext. 75618)

MODE REVIEW.....A work conference to conduct a major review of the MODE System will be held the week of January 10 in New Orleans. The goals of the conference will be to review all MODE personnel reports to develop an overall plan for the redesign of the total MODE system. The last major review of MODE output was made in April 1971.

Agency MODE representatives will be in New Orleans for the full 5-day conference. Agency personnel officers will attend only the sessions on the last two days to discuss the redesign of the MODE System. (Contact: Verna Deane Brown, OP, ext. 73641)

NATIONAL FINANCE CENTER.....

- ...Excessive Travel Advances - Demand letters have been sent to 3,494 employees requesting prompt payment of excessive travel advances. Over \$2.3 million is involved.
- ...Takeover of Administrative and Program Claims Responsibilities - Full transfer of responsibilities covering all billings processed by the centralized billings and collection systems should be completed by April 1, 1977. Final arrangements are being discussed with AMS and APHIS.
- ...Improved Communications with Agencies - A procedure to be used by agencies in identifying and focusing on problems relating to NFC operations has been issued. This procedure, in addition to periodic meetings with agencies, should result in improved services for the Department.
- ...Visitors - The Director of the Railway Division of the Pakistan Ministry of Finance visited the NFC to see the departmental payroll system prior to automating the 140,000-employee Railway payroll system. Four members of the staff of the Clerk of the House of Representatives visited the NFC in preparation for automating payment and account functions of the House.
- ...Inquiry Unit - The telephone company has completed a two-week monitoring of incoming calls to the Inquiry Unit. During this period, no calls were blocked because all lines were in use. Following this review, GSA was requested to monitor the 23 FTS trunk lines dedicated to the NFC. This review pointed up a 15% busy rate to the existing FTS lines and, as a result, GSA will install 4 additional circuits within the next month.
- ...Property Management Information System - Discussions have been held with OO staff concerning the development of the Property Management Information System. The target date for implementing the first phase of the system - personal property for SARS agencies - is October 1, 1977. NFC will continue to develop requirements for real property and motor vehicles with target implementation scheduled for October 1978.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES.....Thanks to all those who submitted articles during the past year. Deadlines for submitting articles, and publication dates for the first six months of 1977 are as follows:

<u>Deadlines for Articles</u>	<u>Publication Date</u>
1-4	1-10
1-18	1-24
2-1	2-7
2-15	2-21
3-1	3-7
3-15	3-21
3-29	4-4
4-12	4-18
4-26	5-2
5-10	5-16
5-24	5-30
6-7	6-13
6-21	6-27

Please feel free to submit articles; let others know what you are doing.
(Contact: Edwardene Rees, OMF, ext. 75301)